

Message Text

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47

ACTION AF-06

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PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 ACDA-05 IO-11 OC-05 CCO-00

CAB-02 COME-00 DOTE-00 EB-07 FAA-00 SY-05 SCCT-01

TRSE-00 OMB-01 /096 W

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O 161506Z FEB 76

FM AMEMBASSY LAGOS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 3366

INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY ACCRA

AMEMBASSY CONAKRY

AMEMBASSY COTONOU

AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE

AMEMBASSY LOME

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MONROVIA

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY NDJAMENA

AMEMBASSY NIAMEY

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE

AMCONSUL DOUALA

AMCONSUL CAPETOWN

AMCONSUL IBADAN

AMCONSUL KADUNA

C O N F I D E N T I A L LAGOS 1906

CAPETOWN FOR AMEMBASSY

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PINS, PFOR, NI

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SUBJECT: SITREP-ABORTIVE COUP

REF: LAGOS 1894, 1883, 1882, AND PREVIOUS

SUMMARY: AS YET THERE IS LITTLE FACTUAL NEWS TO REPORT ON REASONS BEHIND LAST FRIDAY'S ATTEMPTED COUP. SITUATION IN COUNTRY IS RETURNING TO NORMAL AND FMG APPEARS IN SECURE CONTROL. LEADER OF THE ABORTIVE COUP REMAINS AT LARGE. BORDERS AND AIRPORTS REMAIN CLOSED TO INTERNATIONAL TRAFFIC AND DUSK TO DAWN CURFEW REMAINS IN EFFECT. WE SEE NO PRESENT EVIDENCE TO INDICATE SIGNIFICANT FORTHCOMING CHANGE IN NIGERIAN FOREIGN POLICY OR RELATIONSHIPS WITH U.S. UNDER OBASANJO'S LEADERSHIP. IN HIGHLIGHTING ACHIEVEMENTS OF MUHAMMED'S TENURE IN OFFICE, INFORMATION MEDIA ARE HAILING HIS RESISTANCE TO U.S. "ARM TWISTING" ON ANGOLA WHICH MAY KEEP ALIVE FOR A TIME THE SUSPICIONS THAT USG HAD HAND IN COUP ATTEMPT. END SUMMARY.

1. GENERAL SITUATION: COUNTRY RETURNING TO NORMAL AFTER LAST FRIDAY'S ABORTIVE COUP. THE COUP ATTEMPT DID NOT RPT NOT ENJOY WIDE SUPPORT, AND AS FAR AS WE CAN ASCERTAIN THE ONLY THINGS THE PLOTTERS ACCOMPLISHED WERE MUHAMMED'S ASSASSINATION, THE SEIZURE OF NBC'S RADIO STATION IN LAGOS, THE ABDUCTION AND MURDER OF GOVERNOR TAIWO IN ILORIN, AND THE PLAYING OF MARTIAL MUSIC OVER IBADAN RADIO. BPAO KANO CONFIRMS THERE WAS SHOOTING NEAR KANO SATURDAY, WHICH TENDS TO SUBSTANTIATE REPORTS REACHING LAGOS THERE WAS SOME TRIBAL RUCKUS THERE, ALLEGEDLY BETWEEN TIVS AND HAUSAS. GOVERNMENT SPOKESMAN IN KANO, HOWEVER, DENIED YESTERDAY THAT THERE WAS ANY TRIBAL UNREST IN KANO "AS OF THAT TIME". THE LEADER OF THE ABORTIVE COUP. LT. COL. B. S. DIMKA, REMAINS AT LARGE, WHICH MAY EXPLAIN CONTINUING CLOSURE OF NIGERIAN BORDERS AND AIRPORTS TO INTERNATIONAL TRAFFIC. DIRECTOR CIVIL AVIATION SAYS HE DOES NOT RPT NOT KNOW WHEN AIRPORTS WILL REOPEN. ONE AIRPLANE DID ARRIVE YESTERDAY FROM LONDON, WITH PASSENGERS INCLUDING COMMISSIONER FOR TRADE MAJ. GEN. YOUWA (BACK FROM MANILA UNCTAD MEETING) AND IBRAHIM GARBA, SCHOOLBOY SON OF JOHN GARBA, FORMER AMBASSADOR TO US.

2. REASONS FOR COUP ATTEMPT: WE HAVE NO RPT NO FACTURAL REPORTS ON WHAT LED DIMKA TO ATTEMPT THE COUP. HOWEVER, IN RECORDED STATEMENT READ OVER RADIO FRIDAY, DIMKA SAID "MUHAMMED'S HYPOCRISY HAD BEEN DETECTED", POSSIBLY A CHARGE THAT FORMER HEAD OF STATE WAS TWO-FACED ON CORRUPTION (STATE 36550). OTHER SPECULATION MIGHT
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INCLUDE UNHAPPINESS WITH DISMISSALS OF CIVIL SERVANTS AND ARMY OFFICERS, AND PERSONAL GRIEVANCES AGAINST A SYSTEM WHICH APPEARED TO REWARD SENIOR OFFICERS MORE LAVISHLY THAN THE MIDDLE GRADES. WHATEVER THE REASONS, THE IMPORTANT FACT IS THAT ARMED FORCES AND POLICE REMAINED LOYAL TO FMG AND COUP WAS FOILED.

3. OBASANJO STEWARDSHIP: IN HIS FIRST NATIONWIDE BROADCAST AFTER

BEING APPOINTED HEAD OF FEDERAL MILITARY GOVERNMENT AND COMMANDER IN CHIEF OF ARMED FORCES, LT. GEN. O. OBASANJO EMPHASIZED HIS INTENTION TO CONTINUE THE POLICIES OF MUHAMMED. WE WOULD NOTE THAT HE HAD OFTEN ACTED AS SPOKESMAN FOR THESE POLICIES. BY STRESSING HE HAD TAKEN THE JOB AGAINST HIS PERSONAL WISHES, HE ALSO MANAGED TO CONVEY THE IMPRESSION THAT THE RULING SUPREME MILITARY COUNCIL (SMC) WAS UNITED IN ITS DECISION TO ELEVATE HIM TO THE TOP. INDEED, GIVEN OBASANJO'S NUMBER TWO POSITION IN THE HIERARCHY, THE SMC WOULD HAVE NEEDED A GOOD REASON TO EXPLAIN A FAILURE TO NAME HIM TO THE NUMBER ONE POSITION. HE IS YORUBA AND NOT RPT NOT FROM FORMER NORTHERN REGION (ONLY ONE OTHER NON-NORTHERNER HAS EVER RULED NIGERIA-- IRONSI FOR 6 MONTHS IN 1966), A FACT WHICH THE SMC WOULD HAVE BEEN RELUCTANT TO ADMIT WAS THE REASON FOR FAILURE TO APPOINT HIM HEAD OF STATE. OBASANJO'S YORUBA CONNECTIONS ALSO MAY EXPLAIN WHY LT. COL. YAR A'DUA WAS ELEVATED TO CHIEF OF STAFF SUPREME HEADQUARTERS AND PROMOTED TO BRIGADIER AS THE SMC MAY WELL HAVE FELT IT WAS NECESSARY TO HAVE A MUSLIM FROM THE FAR NORTH NEAR THE TOP OF THE HIERARCHY. THIS MAY ALSO HAVE A BEARING ON WHY THE NUMBER THREE IN THE OLD POWER STRUCTURE, LT. GE. DANJUMA, WAS NOT AUTOMATICALLY MOVED UP; DANJUMA IS A MIDDLE BELT CHRISTIAN. WE ALSO NOTE THAT DANJUMA REMAINS CHIEF OF STAFF OF THE ARMY, THUS RETAINING HIS CONTROL OVER THAT KEY POWER CENTER. YAR A'DUA'S ELEVATION MAY ALSO BE ATTRIBUTABLE TO HIS REPORTED INFLUENTIAL ROLE ON THE SMC OVER THE PAST SEVEN MONTHS (LAGOS A-142, 9/21/75; A-185, 12/21/75 BOTH NOTAL).

4. ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS, WE CAN EXPECT A CONTINUATION OF THE FMG'S HARD LINE ON SOUTHERN AFRICAN ISSUES, INCLUDING ANGOLA. FROM OUR READING OF EVENTS, OBASANJO (TOGETHER WITH MUHAMMED) WAS A PRIME MOVER BEHIND NIGERIA'S STRONG PRO-MPLA POLICY OVER THE PAST SEVERAL MONTHS.

5. OBASANJO IS GENERALLY DESCRIBED AS A PRAGMATIST AND A CAPABLE
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PROFESSIONAL SOLDIER. EMBASSY OFFICERS WHO HAVE HAD DEALINGS WITH HIM HAVE DESCRIBED HIM AS STRONG-WILLED, CALCULATING, AND POLITICALLY AWARE. HE HAS NOT RPT NOT IMPRESSED AMERICANS AS BEING ANTI-AMERICAN, DESPITE HIS DISAGREEMENT WITH OUR SOUTHERN AFRICAN POLICY, AND HE IS AN ADMIRER OF AMERICAN PRODUCTS AND TECHNOLOGY, PARTICULARLY AS THEY CAN BENEFIT NIGERIA. LAST JULY'S OCCUPATION OF THE EMBASSY ANNEX (LONDON 10727 NOTAL) BY OBASANJO'S TROOPS, HOWEVER, MAY REFLECT A TENDENCY TO BECOME IMPATIENT WITH PROBLEMS WHICH ARE NOT RESOLVED IMMEDIATELY--- IN SHORT, A SOLDIER'S ATTITUDE TOWARD PROBLEM SOLVING.

6. WE WILL HAVE TO WAIT AND SEE WHAT EFFECT MUHAMMED'S ASSASSINATION WILL HAVE ON THE ATTITUDES OF NIGERIA'S LEADERSHIP. CERTAINLY FOR SOME TIME TO COME WE CAN EXPECT THE GOVERNMENT TO BE MORE SECURITY CONSCIOUS AND CONCERNED WITH RUMORS OF COUP ATTEMPTS OR

ASSASSINATION PLOTS. ACCESS TO THE HIGHEST LEVELS MAY BECOME MORE RESTRICTED.

7. US/NIGERIAN RELATIONS: WE DON'T EXPECT ANY IMMEDIATE CHANGE IN U.S./NIGERIAN RELATIONS. THE ANGOLA ISSUE WILL REMAIN A SORE POINT. IN THE MEDIA EULOGIES OF MUHAMMED, IT IS BEING STRESSED IN RECAPITULATING HIS ACHIEVEMENTS THAT THE FORMER HEAD OF THE FMG SUCCESSFULLY RESISTED THE "ABOMINABLE" THE/ARM TWISTING/TACTICS OF PRESIDENT FORD" OVER ANGOLA. THE NATIONALLY BROADCAST TV PICTORIAL HISTORY OF MUHAMMED'S TENURE IN OFFICE CLAIMED THAT THIS ACHIEVEMENT MARKED THE FINEST HOUR FOR NIGERIA SINCE THE "OBNOXIOUS" DEFENSE PACT WITH BRITAIN WAS SCRAPPED MORE THAN A DECADE AGO. THESE COMMENTS,

HOWEVER, APPEAR TO BE CAST MORE IN PRAISE OF NIGERIAN FIRMNESS THAN AS AN ANTI-AMERICAN CAMPAIGN. NEVERTHELESS, THE COMMENTS DO KEEP ALIVE

SUSPICIONS AND RUMORS WHICH SURFACED JUST AFTER THE COUP THAT THE USG HAD HAD A HAND IN THE AFFAIR. IN A MORE POSITIVE DEVELOPMENT WE WOULD ALSO NOTE THAT THE NEW FMG HAS CONFIRMED THE SIGNING OF A \$153 MILLION TELECOMMUNICATIONS CONTRACT BETWEEN THE FMG AND TCOM WESTINGHOUSE. THE ANNOUNCEMENT, FIRST MADE THE EVENING BEFORE LAST FRIDAY'S COUP ATTEMPT, HAS BEEN REPEATED IN NEWS BROADCASTS THE LAST COUPLE OF DAYS.

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